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that closed land was not forthcoming; so, as an alternative, he got the permission of the Maharajah of Sikkim to study the Lepchas in his country. During the whole of the visit Mr. Morris was my companion, and it was thanks to him that I was able to ignore both the practical and administrative difficulties in a strange land and under strange conditions which would most probably have proved insuperable to me unaided. Through his long-standing friendship with the Maharajah we not only obtained the permission to live indefinitely in Sikkim—a permission not easily obtained—but also his active collaboration in the choice of a site to work in and the co-operation of all the people, official and unofficial, directly or indirectly involved. I find it difficult to express adequately my sense of great indebtedness to Mr. Morris; his knowledge of local customs, both Native and European, were of inestimable help.

It was also through my book *Africa Dances* that I met Dr. Margaret Mead of the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. Ruth Benedict of Columbia University, and Dr. John Dollard, of the Institute of Human Relations, Yale University, New Haven. Under the guidance of Drs. Mead and Benedict I spent the winter of 1935–36 studying the methodology and theoretical background of anthropology, and from Dr. John Dollard I learned to see in focus the interrelated problems of the individual in society. It is quite impossible for me to estimate my intellectual debt to these three inspiring teachers, and I have also to thank them for a very great service; for they undertook the great burden of reading the first draft of this book, commenting on it and advising me on a number of points. The sacrifice of their time by these hard-working people is a gift of inestimable value; my only hope is that this book is, to some slight extent, not altogether unworthy of their pains. If this should happily be so, it is almost entirely owing to their instruction and advice. I must also thank very sincerely Mrs. F. Norman, of the Department of Psychological Medicine, of Guy's Hospital, London, for having read the first draft of this book, advised me upon it, and discussed it with me; her help, particularly in Book Two, has been very great.

I arrived in India at the very end of 1936. Before going into Sikkim I spent two months in Kalimpong studying the Lepcha language with the help of missionised Lepchas. At the end of that period I had an adequate comprehension of the language, but, though I could understand everything that was said with, I think,

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most of the over-tones, I never spoke it more than very haltingly. Lepcha is a simple language structurally, but the labour of learning by heart several thousand vocables which it was impossible to connect with any language system I knew was a hard one. Fearing my working knowledge of the language might be inadequate I therefore took with me into Sikkim as an interpreter a young Lepcha named Sukra Singh who was being trained as a dispenser. His knowledge of English, though not profound, was adequate, and I was always able to check up on his not infrequent mistranslations. In the event, the presence of this interpreter proved very useful. The Lepchas have a tendency to monologue, for one person to speak continuously while the rest listen. If I can so express it, the Lepchas talk in paragraphs, and not in single sentences; they fall naturally into a long swinging rhythm, and much dislike being interrupted or held up in the middle of a narrative or anecdote. I found I could not possibly keep up my notes and a conversation at the same time; but the Lepchas found it an easy matter to make a long statement and then pause while the statement was repeated. Since none of the Lepchas of Lingthem had had any but the most casual contact with Europeans—indeed most of the men and all the women had never seen one before—they had no set ideas of the way Europeans behave. They have however in their mythology and stories the tradition of nobles (into which group we naturally fell as being under the protection and recommendation of the Maharajah) being accompanied by servants, and doing all business through their intermediary. Without the use of an interpreter who, with his repetitions which I hardly listened to, would slow down the pace of a conversation sufficiently for me to take full notes, I could never have taken down the life-histories and elaborate ritual in anything like such full detail. When he was not present I had to ask people to wait, or to repeat themselves; the Lepchas disliked this, just as much as they disliked questions demanding a direct answer; they were quickly disconcerted and lost the thread of their narrative. Until I knew people well I asked as few questions as possible; as far as possible I checked and counter-checked every statement, but this was mostly done spontaneously by different Lepchas discussing identical subjects, or by their arguing among themselves. The most I would do with strangers was to suggest a subject for discussion; I only cross-examined those people with whom I had already a confidential relationship.

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I am aware that the use of interpreters is held to invalidate a great deal of anthropological work; but the Lepchas got used to Sukra Singh—a person of endless patience and constant good temper—as soon or sooner than they did to us, and I question whether his absence would have made for any greater intimacy. I was never really dependent on him, and, without his slowing up the pace of conversation, I could never have got the almost word for word texts that I obtained. When he was not with me I found myself quite incapable of taking sufficiently full notes; and those I made from memory subsequently inevitably lacked the clearness and precision of those I took more normally. Unless I had invented some form of Lepcha shorthand or employed a dictaphone my work among the Lepchas would have been far less detailed; only when talking to children or to big groups was the presence of my interpreter useless or a hindrance.

I have put a few notes on the Lepcha language into an appendix[1] for the benefit of those who are interested in such matters and also a vocabulary of those Lepcha words which I have been forced to employ in the text. I have avoided using Lepcha words as far as possible, and have given no Lepcha texts; I am unable to understand the reasoning of those anthropologists who consider that the inclusion in an English book of sentences in a language which not one reader can understand gives the study greater scientific or objective value. My own feeling is that the value of texts is almost entirely linguistic; and so for the use of philologists I propose to deposit a few selected texts (stories and prayers) with my Lepcha vocabulary with the School of Oriental Languages, London.

I lived in Zongu among the Lepchas during March, April and May 1937. Frequently in this book, in order to avoid clumsiness, I have used the present tense and referred to different periods as 'now', 'three months ago', 'ten years ago.' In all cases the point of reference from which time is measured is the spring of 1937.

In India and Sikkim I received kindness and help from so many people that it is difficult even to enumerate them all. The many people who have experienced the great and unfailing kindness and hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Odling of Kalimpong will understand that I can find no words to express my gratitude to them; you cannot thank people who have given you a home. I should also like to thank very sincerely His Highness Sir Tashi Namgyal, K.C.I.E., Maharajah of Sikkim, for his kindness and

[1] See Appendix VI.

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'From that time Ginoo *moong pandi* and Linthem *anyou* destroy all those who are too prosperous or have too many children. That is the reason why you should never remark on a person's prosperity; for if Ginoo *moong* hears you they will lose everything.'

Ginoo *moong* still claims victims today. One of the latest was the wife of Ongden, one of the richest members of the community, unique in having six healthy sons. She was always grumbling, saying how poor she was and how little ground they had been able to sow; to which the neighbours would reply 'How greedy you are; you are really very prosperous.' Ginoo *moong* heard this talk, and so she died, while still young. It is also perhaps the fear of Ginoo *moong* which makes Lepchas so reluctant to say what their property is; it was practically the only subject on which people were secretive and unwilling to talk; most of the information I obtained on the subject I got from neighbours. The majority of the households are all on nearly the same economic level; four or five are somewhat above, and three below the average.

iii

The chief crops raised by the Lepchas on the Talung side of Zongu are wet rice, dry rice, buckwheat, maize, cardamum, and different varieties of millet or eleusine. On the warmer Teesta side a certain amount of sugar cane and manioc is also raised. The wet rice is naturally exclusively cultivated on the terraced fields, which are capable of being flooded. Seven different types of wet rice are recognised—two of them being suitable for cultivation on the higher terraces, while the other five need the warmer climate of the valley. Some of the richer people grow these five varieties in rotation, as this is believed to rest the soil, the variety sown depending on individual choice; in these cases the seed is not saved, but is bought each year, generally from Gangtok. The majority however only grow one variety and save their own seed.

In Lingthem wet rice has been introduced for less than twenty years, and in other villages even more recently; some places, especially on the far side of the Talung, where the natural water is less plentiful, do not grow it yet. When the Mandal first learned about this crop he had experimental terraces made for three years; it was then gradually adopted by the other villagers, as they became convinced of the superior yield of this crop, and the amount of terraced ground is increased annually. Almost every household

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Even for a Lepcha Gongyop is preternaturally shy and I had to woo him very assiduously before he would talk to me. But I found with him as I did with others that once his confidence was gained he was willing to talk absolutely without reserve. Indeed one day I had to run away from him because I had asked him a question about his divining necklace; he explained in great distress that if he told anybody the full details about it he would loose all the power of divining through it, so please would I not ask him. I changed the subject, but naturally curious, kept glancing at the necklace, and after a little he started to tell me about it. A similar dilemma arose three or four times with Lepchas; it would seem as though once they had accepted you they can neither lie nor prevaricate, and will tell secrets which they will bitterly regret mentioning later. Towards the end of our relationship Gongyop asked me very shyly (for it was, in a way, a confession of failure for a Mun) for medicine for sores: and then he showed me on his shoulder a growth which to my unpractised eye looked like cancer.

Gongyop was the youngest of four children; almost as soon as he was weaned he was adopted by the younger brother of his paternal grandmother in whose house he spent the greater part of his life; recently however he has returned to look after his blind old father. His eldest brother, who was a lama, died with his wife and two of his children in a dysentery epidemic; his two surviving children are Sangkyar, a cretinous defective, and Satéo, who is lame and rather silly. The next brother is Thyak Thimbu; he too is a Mun (he has the paternal spirit, Gongyop the maternal); after him came a sister, now dead, who was married, first to a 'brother' of Dunbi, and then to Kurma. Gongyop became a Padem twenty years ago, the spirit descending to him from his father's maternal uncle who died five years before the possession; he became a Mun five years ago, the spirit descending from his mother's elder sister who died ten years before the possession.

'At the time of the onset of the illness which showed the possession of Padem I had been married for five years and my wife was pregnant; she was later delivered of a still-born daughter. Subsequently we had a son who is still living. I was taken very ill, so ill that I could not eat or drink *chi* or move or even go out of the house to relieve myself; I felt as though I was bound with ropes. After another Mun had recognised the spirit which was possessing me I recovered quickly and was then able to perform all the rituals of which Padem are capable. There is no need of a teacher for the

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of food would be almost impossible to estimate, if it were not for the fact that it is the central theme of so many individual memories. One of the chief justifications of the collection of life histories is given by the experience of my friend Mr. R. F. Barton,[3] who, on his third visit to the Ifugao, discovered through a life history a group of family gods with special observances of whose existence fifteen years life among the Ifugao with two long periods of objective investigation had given him no clue.

A third advantage of the life history, to my mind—though this point is of less immediate impact on sociology—is that it is a valuable corrective. There is at present a very obvious tendency in political and sociological thinking to ignore the individual in favour of his political or social functions; this dehumanising of social thought seems to me not only undesirable but also extremely dangerous; a great deal of the misery and distress in the contemporary scene appears to me to derive directly from the habit of thinking of people in groups instead of as individuals.

ii

Since I wished if possible to collect a life history, and since for various personal reasons my stay outside Europe could not be overlong, I was very lucky in finding in the Lepchas a society with a relatively unelaborated culture (outside the sphere of religion), and moreover one which was in no way fractionalised and of which no portion was guarded as a secret from the rest of the community. The energy which in other societies might have had to be directed to the discovery of magic or secret rites and initiations I was able to divert to the establishment of personal contacts. Moreover my preliminary study of the language in British India had given me a working knowledge of most of the formal arrangements of the society, such as the kinship terms and marriage arrangements, so that after the first month I was able to devote a considerable amount of my time to the non-formalised aspects of the culture and to try to get life histories.

Now to learn the story of another's life it is obviously necessary that the person who is telling his story should tell it willingly and have confidence in his listener; otherwise you will inevitably get lies and evasions. Here, too, I was served by the Lepchas' tendency

[3] Author of *Ifugao Law and Customs*, *The Rising Sun*, etc.

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124 to monologue, to recount anecdotes, to illustrate a theme by their own past experiences. I soon noticed that Kurma had a particular tendency to do this, and also that he was flattered by my obvious interest in what he had to say. After we had been in fairly continuous contact for about a month I asked him to tell me what he remembered of his childhood. He did so willingly, and thereafter it was easy to bring him back to the subject of his own past life by asking a single leading question. 'What happened after you did so-and-so?' 'What happened to so-and-so?' While he was telling his story I asked practically no questions at all; I kept all queries for subsequent meetings when impersonal subjects would be discussed, when I would interject them without apparent emphasis. Altogether about six full days were passed mainly in the discussion of Kurma's own life; I should undoubtedly have had more material if he had not first been summoned to visit his parents-in-law and on his return been taken ill with fever. Besides these special sessions Kurma would often introduce apposite anecdotes of his own past life, both before and after I had started getting his story.

With Kurma, more than with any other individual in Lingthem we managed to set up a pattern of mutual obligations. As *gyapön* he had been charged by the Mandal to look after us, especially in the matter of getting provisions; he enjoyed the reflected importance of his contact with Europeans, and I flattered him by appealing to him somewhat more often than was necessary. He was anyhow more disposed to talk than to work and was very amenable to cajolery.

I did not like Kurma very much and had not very full confidence in him. I repeatedly tried to trip him up by asking him identical questions at considerable intervals of time, and to check up on him by questioning other people. Actually my distrust was practically unfounded; only on one major point—the death of Banyok—did I find him completely incorrect, and at a later date he voluntarily retracted his first version.

[157] Both through temperament and circumstances Kurma was an a-typical Lepcha. In temperament he had an unusual desire for power, was boastful, and had decided sadistic traits. Sociotically he was unfortunately circumstanced and his treatment of his circumstances was unusual. His mother appears to have been exceptionally poor and his adopting parents exceptionally unkind. Adoption is of itself statistically rare—only eleven people out of the 176 in

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Lingthem were or had been adopted; and Kurma is unique in having completely abandoned his adopting parents to return to his biological parents. Again as a person with two elder brothers Kurma is unusual in having become head of the household at an early age and in having had the heavy economic burden of seven funerals in a fairly short stretch of time.[4] He is also unusual in having started with an irregular sexual union, and extremely unfortunate in the mortality of his wives.

Nevertheless, despite his unusual character and circumstances, I believe that Kurma's life-story, incomplete though it is, gives a good illustration of the dynamic workings of Lepcha culture and an adequate cross-section view of Lepcha society. By developing the themes which he touches on,[5] sometimes very cursorily, one would have an almost complete picture of Lepcha social arrangements; if it were not for the awkwardness of such an arrangement, all the preceding chapters of this book could be used as amplification for Kurma's story.

I am giving the notes in the form in which I took them. The portions in quotation marks are nearly *verbatim* transcriptions; I could not, however, always write quickly enough to take down every word, and I have omitted the repetitions which swell out all Lepcha stories. The portions told in the third person are chiefly incidents which cropped up in the discussion of other matters.

Although I have not altered the notes in any way I am presenting them in more or less historical order, which is not that in which the information was given to me. To simplify reading I am giving cross-headings, and a few explanatory notes. For those points in his narrative on which I questioned other people and on which their versions differed considerably from Kurma's I have presented the alternative versions in brackets and italics. For ease of reference I am also giving overleaf a calendar of the more or less well-established dates in Kurma's life and the names and dates of birth and death of his immediate family. To bring his story up to date I have put after his narrative a journal of his doings during the period when I was observing him.

[4] The only people in Lingthem similarly circumstanced were Nariya and Rigya, and they were economically far better able to stand the strain.

[5] I have omitted in the following pages all the impersonal material (ceremonies, etc.) which Kurma incorporated in his story.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE FIRST DORJÉ LAPOON, HIS FAMILY, AND JIROONG

i

124 It is not enough to wish to collect life-histories; it is also necessary to get people who are willing to tell them. I very much regret that I was not able to obtain in any comparable detail the story of a well-adjusted Lepcha, to contrast with that of Kurma with his obvious maladjustments. But I think it was just his maladjustments which made him so remarkably communicative; his feeling of inferiority and ill-treatment, his consciousness of being somewhat different to the rest of the community led him to place more confidence and spend more time with strangers than a well-integrated person would be likely to do.

I have already said that I consider Chala Mandal and Tafoor to be the best-integrated Lepchas in Lingthem; I saw a great deal of both of them—Tafoor was almost my most constant and altogether my most reliable informant—but my attempts to get them to tell their own stories were almost completely unsuccessful. They both had very little self-feeling; they envisaged their relationships with others entirely practically and objectively, apparently untinged by emotion. Their feelings towards others were always rational, and their accounts of their dealings with them consisted of long lists of mutual help and benefits, with very great emphasis on the food given and received.

I did get short accounts of their past lives from a number of people; some of them have already been given (e.g. Gongyop's story in Chapter Eight, Rigya's in Chapter Fourteen, and so on) in full, and small excerpts have been made from others which are not full enough to be informative. Since, however, I feel that Kurma's story by itself would give an over-biased picture, I propose to give as a counterbalance the interrelated stories of the first Dorjé Lapoon, of his son Datoop and of his wife and family, and of Jiroong, whose first wife the first Dorjé Lapoon stole.

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124 The first Dorjé Lapoon I saw very little of, and his history was told to me, partly by Kurma, and partly by his son Datoop. He was a very old man and spent most of his time alone in the field-house where he lived looked after by his younger son. I also learned from Kurma that portion of Jiroong's life which was involved in the scandal of his first wife and the Dorjé Lapoon, and also the story of Jiroong's sister. The greater part of Jiroong's life and all the rest of the stories were got from the people themselves. It is worth remarking that, although these people are all less obviously maladjusted than Kurma, they had all except Jiroong had the unusual experience of living some years outside Zongu.

The first Dorjé Lapoon, Datoop and Jiroong were all lamas; Datoop was by far the most pious. Jiroong was a lama through his horoscope and not through birth, and appeared to attach rather more importance to the Mun ritual; in his house his sister always officiated. Mrs. Datoop was a very strong character, and overbore both her husband and her son Pembu. Jiroong was also dominated by his wife.

The accompanying genealogies should make the rather involved relationships clearer. (See page 417).

ii

The first Dorjé Lapoon.

X 159 588 The first Dorjé Lapoon, now aged eighty-two, has been his whole life long poor, lustful and shameless. As a young man he was married to his first wife, but after three years he left her because he wished to marry another woman, one Lungdeumu, his classificatory aunt.[1] He was told that he and she were too closely related for them to marry; but he was shameless and persisted in the marriage. Since the consanguinity was all through the female line no social action other than expressed disapproval was taken against this incestuous match.

X 159 Lungdeumu was the mother of his son Datoop, who was born in 1881. As soon as the child was born the Dorjé Lapoon took a dislike to his wife and went away to Darjeeling for a year to work there. On his return Lungdeumu's brother tried to induce him to return to his wife but he refused. Thereupon Lungdeumu's brother said 'You are no longer responsible for my sister; I shall give her in marriage again, and you will have no claim on the bride-price.'

[1] Her mother and his maternal grandmother were biological sisters.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

however, we took a complete outfit, including even china plates and cups, a regular battery of pots and pans, and vast quantities of a special brand of American coffee (which I must admit was excellent), and special machines for its preparation. Most of the apparatus was never used.

On arrival at Gangtok our staff was increased by Palden, one of His Highness's Lepcha orderlies, who was to act as liaison between us and the locals. He spent most of his time in scouring the countryside in search of chickens and eggs. This job was not quite such a sinecure as perhaps it sounds; for towards the end of our stay we had consumed practically all the local poultry and had to get even eggs from as far as three and four days' journey away. By virtue of his official connection with the Palace, Palden's status (albeit humble; his normal duties consisting in the delivery of letters in Gangtok) was swollen to enormous stature in the eyes of the trusting Lepchas. From our point of view, however, this was all to the good, for it enabled him to demand permission for us to see all sorts of domestic ceremonies which would otherwise have been entirely hidden from our eyes.

There was also Geoffrey's English-speaking interpreter, Sukra Sing; and to work with me, one Dhawa, who spoke Lepcha and Nepali, but who knew no English. Both of these were Christians, the latter being a recent convert. They were both very disapproving, as indeed was Palden, of the local Lepchas, to whom they considered themselves vastly superior. On wet days, or on the frequent occasions when we had no informants, Dhawa would spend the whole day, from earliest dawn until well after dark, playing a bamboo flute which he had himself constructed. Unless interrupted he would play right through the Church of Scotland Hymnal, sometimes repeating his favourite tunes five and six times in succession. I believe he did this as an atonement for the extremely Rabelaisian conversations he was at times asked to translate. Whenever the conversation had in his opinion gone far enough in this direction he would get up without a word and slink quietly away; and shortly after we would hear the

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horribly familiar strains of "Abide with me," slightly out of tune, issuing from the house next door in which he and the servants lived. I never made any effort to restrain him, for which I hope to receive due credit in any future existence which may be my lot.

Sukra Sing was what in India is technically known as a "compounder," which means that he had worked in a hospital for some months, knew a certain amount (in his case a dangerous amount) of simple doctoring and first-aid methods, and was authorised to "compound," or make up medicines to prescription, without, however, being responsible if he inadvertently confused aconite with aqua. He was also under training as a missionary and was working under the auspices of the Church of Scotland, whose missionaries are rightly interested less in obtaining "scalps" than in improving the people's condition, the only possible excuse, in my opinion, for missionary work amongst primitive peoples. I shall have more to say about missionary activities later on in this book; but in the meantime I cannot help thinking that Sukra Sing will now go out into the field with considerably more tolerance for his "uncivilised" Lepcha brethren than would otherwise have been the case. He was fortunately not musical, but showed signs towards the end of our stay of a wakening interest in the flute. Dhawa, however, preferred to play solo.

* * * * *

We left Gangtok without any very clear idea of our exact destination. His Highness had suggested Jongu as being the most suitable place in which to commence our studies; and so to Jongu we set off. No one was quite sure of the exact position of this place; nor was the Ordnance Survey map helpful, for it omitted all trace of this, to us at least, important place. On arrival at Mangen, however, where we were to leave the main trade route through Sikkim, the mystery was solved, for it there transpired that Jongu was not a village but a district; a district, moreover, which stretched from roughly